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The Teaching of English in Africa: An Evaluation through Interviews with Former Teachers

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The Teaching of English in Africa:
An Evaluation through Interviews with Former Teachers

By Lucy Lawson

MAT IV

This report is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Master of Arts in Teaching
Degree at the Experiment's School for International
Training in Brattleboro, Vermont.

Date _____

This Project by Lucy L. Lawson is accepted in its
present form by Raymond C. Clark
Principal Advisor

Date May 15, 1974

Readers: David Rein
David Rein

Betsy Warner
Betsy Warner

ABSTRACT:

This project concerns itself with the Problems of English Teaching in Africa and suggestions toward improvement.

The writer, after three years' experience in American public schools, universities, and other educational programs, has come to realize that there is much to be done to improve teaching methods and techniques in the teacher training colleges and in-service training of teachers in Africa. Workshop programs with new and developing materials of teaching and techniques are recommended as one solution to these deficiencies.

The ideas in this paper grew out of interviews with former American teachers of English in Africa and also articles written by British teachers of English. The writer, after collecting these various ideas, made a careful analysis of the problems and suggestions and arrived at the conclusion that in order to improve the teaching methods there should be an improvement in the educational policies of the Ministry of Education.

Workshop programs, external examination, supervision of beginning teachers and class size are the specific areas the writer finds most in need of improvement.

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PREFACE

I undertook this project because after being in the American school system and familiarizing myself with the various teaching methods, I realized that there is much African teachers should do to improve their teaching methods, especially in the area of teaching English. English is very important in our educational system since instruction is in English, in most cases, and all the text books and the national newspapers are written in English --- except, of course, in Francophone Africa.

I feel that it is very essential that students be given a sound foundation at the very beginning to get ready to handle their courses in their second language. I therefore solicited the cooperation of many experienced and excellent teachers who have taught English in various parts of Africa in order to get their impressions of teaching English in Africa and to make suggestions for improving the situation.

This project deals with the problems and suggestions given by these teachers and an outline of the interviews between these teachers and myself.

This project has been made possible by the frankness and willingness of these teachers. My unqualified

appreciation and gratitude go to my professors and advisors, especially Ray Clark who willingly agreed to be my Principal Advisor and started me on this project, David Rein, my admirable course advisor, and Betsy, my African sister, because she speaks my language as if she is a born "Ewe".

I am equally most grateful to the other teachers I interviewed, without whose cooperation I would not have gotten the variety of opinions I needed. I am also very grateful to them for taking time out of their already crowded schedules to talk to me and to give me all the excellent advice and suggestions.

II

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I have tried to discuss the views presented by the various people I interviewed on the subject of teaching English in various African countries.

I became concerned about some methods of teaching in African schools from my own personal observations and from books and magazines I have read recently on teaching in African schools. This awareness made me undertake the project to find out what these problems are and what should be done to eliminate them and raise the standard of teaching in these schools.

I made out a questionnaire, a copy of which is attached, through which I tried to find out from qualified American teachers of English their evaluation of their African counterparts, the texts which are used, the methodology and their rating of the linguistic level of the students.

In all I spoke to about twenty English teachers who had taught in different countries in Africa. The countries comprise: Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo, Gabon, Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Morocco.

I wrote out a summary of the interviews which is attached to this paper. Reference to each summary will give one an idea of the similarity of the prob-

lems. Most of them are identical, which proves that these are universal problems and not related to just one particular country in Africa.

After outlining the common problems, I gathered suggestions for solving these problems, thus helping to raise the standard of teaching in these countries especially in the lower or beginning levels where it is most important to lay a sound foundation.

English is Ghana's official language and the language of the government. It is the medium of instruction in the schools. Tests, novels and even the national newspapers are written in English. In order to secure high-paid jobs one must speak, read and write English. For a long time no one in high school got his high school diploma if he failed the English paper, even though he might have made very good grades on his other papers, which, of course, he had written in English.

Many children get their first real contact with the English language when they go to school and might never speak or hear it again until they return to school the following day, because in almost every home people speak their native language.

After about eight or ten years of English in school many children still don't speak or write the language as they should and many have a hard time with their high school work because of their low English competence. Many have attributed this to the way the language is taught in African schools and also to the quality of the teachers who teach it in the lower or beginning levels.

Many well-to-do parents have taken their children out of public schools and sent them to private schools where they are taught to speak English fluently in a short period of time.

My main concern is with the many children whose parents have no money to send them to these private schools. It is my opinion that teaching methods should be improved in schools to raise the standard of English. This has been my main reason for taking the course in teaching English as a Second Language so I could show teachers the different methods of teaching English, especially in the area of teaching English for communication.

I have read quite a few books and articles on English teaching in Africa and the one that gave me the most incentive to carry out my project was an article by David A. Daun.¹ In this article he made an evaluation of English teaching in Africa. After reading this article I decided to make out a questionnaire which would help me find out the problems of English teaching and suggestions toward remedying the problems. I felt such a project would be valuable to people in the teaching field, to those concerned with planning educational policies and to those who might be interested in teaching in Africa.

1. David A. Daun, "A Role for Teaching Materials," English Language Teaching, (Oxford:Oxford University Press, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 120-125.

I spoke to over twenty teachers and collected ideas from written articles as well. The results of the interviews were indeed helpful and I personally learned a lot from them.

After analyzing the interviews I found that all the teachers had similar, if not the same, impressions about the subject. In fact, after talking to one third of them I knew what the other two-thirds of them had to say. By the end of my interviews some of the sentences or words used in describing the system of teaching English in Africa were repeated so often that I had memorized some of them.

I interviewed well-trained teachers, some with lots of experiences before embarking on their African teaching experience, and others completely new in the teaching field whose first teaching experience, aside from their student teaching, was in an African school. To some it was a shocking experience, because they left their country with the idea that they were going to teach other subjects but later found themselves teaching English, just because they are native speakers of the language. It was hard because they never had any basic training in the teaching of the language.

No matter into what category they fell, they all came back with a wider experience than they ever envisioned.

Many, who did not have basic English teaching training, took courses in various universities and are now trained and qualified teachers of English as a Second Language and are teaching this course in schools and universities. Others are helping to train teachers who want to teach in foreign countries. Others have written about their experiences in Africa and others have appealed to the Ministry of Education, in their articles, to look closely into their English teaching curriculum in order to improve teaching.

The most important points of concern mentioned by the teachers I interviewed are listed below:

1. Methodology
2. Class size
3. Teaching materials and texts
4. Level of education and language proficiency of the teachers teaching beginning level students.
5. The problem of transferring an educational system from a foreign country whole-sale (for example, from Britain or France)
6. Teacher training not adequate in preparing students in teaching methods.
7. Memorization - without knowing or understanding what it is, students memorize.

8. Lack of supervision - especially for the young unqualified teachers.
9. Lack of incentives to bring teachers to attend workshop programs which would expose them to new ideas and techniques in teaching.
10. The external examination and its disadvantage for teaching for understanding.

Although I have attached a detailed summary of the interviews I had with each person, I would like to comment on some of the views raised.

Class size is a crucial problem in African schools. I did not realize how crucial until after I had taught in an American public school. It was then that I found what could be achieved in a smaller class and the difference for the teacher in a smaller class. Most of the teachers I interviewed had between forty to fifty students in their classes. This is no surprise to me at all. I agreed with them when they said, "What can one do in a class of fifty students, but to resort to a method that would not take into consideration the individual ability of the students involved?"

The large class size causes a fall in the standard of education, because the teacher obviously gears his/her teaching to the top students - those who are able to answer

questions and do the exercises correctly. The student who is unable to do work at this level is considered the "dummy" by his teacher and his classmates.

This problem is caused by the compulsory education system which increases the number of students to be educated - the governments concentrated on the quantity educated, but there wasn't an equal effort of the quality of education. The increase in the number of students going to school opened an employment gate to less qualified teachers. The result of this is that the schools turn out a lot of students who are not really qualified academically.

Although this might be expensive for a lot of African countries, I think the idea of having teachers' aides in the lower levels is really great and should be adopted. I would also encourage the system of dividing students into levels according to their language or vocabulary proficiency, instead of having about forty students in the class and having only the ten verbal and confident ones do the talking and answering of questions.

I also encourage the system of creating special classes for those students who are slow in catching up with the others or reading classes for those who have special reading problems, as I see done in schools here

in the United States.

If the Government is not able to decrease the number of students in a class, they should at least increase the number of qualified teachers in the schools. By putting two teachers in a class of forty students, both students and teachers could benefit from the education the government so badly wants them to have.

Another issue of major concern was teaching materials, texts and teaching aids. Many felt that teaching materials were inadequate, especially texts. Most of the texts were imported from England, the United States and France. Not only are these texts outdated and no longer used in the countries they come from, but many of the topics in them do not in any way relate to the students using them. It is this kind of texts that African teachers are forced to use and yet at the same time must try to stimulate interest in using, reading and writing English.

Although some African texts are being introduced, some teachers observed that the students did not respond to them because they prefer to read Shakespeare, Dickens, etc., instead of the African texts because they are more curious about things in other countries rather than things they already know about.

No one disputed the idea of having foreign texts, but

they felt such texts should be written with the African student and his/her lifestyle in mind, with vocabulary and topics they could relate to and understand.

During my own school days I used the "Blue Book Series". This text is definitely made for British students. The vocabulary was unbelievably difficult and the stories were about snow, or Westminster Abbey, and in most cases there were no accompanying pictures or slides. I remember the closest description my teacher could give of snow was "big ice blocks falling from the sky". My teacher, of course, had never been to a country where it snowed.

I do not object to importing foreign texts, but the vocabulary and the stories should at least be written so students are stimulated by the reading, not just being drilled in word pronunciation and memorization. I also feel it is high time our schools throw away the out-dated texts; some date as far back as my father's primary school days. There has been, however, some progress in this direction.

Teaching aids - although there are not as many commercial teaching aids in African schools as there are in the United States, I feel we can still teach well without them. Some teachers make their own teaching aids,

while others feel it is too much bother. Teachers could be shown how to use their environment in good teaching situations. Teachers could take students shopping in stores, or to a post office, or police station, or market where they could be put in a "real life" situation to make use of their English. Students could be put in a situation where they had to ask directions in their new language. This would certainly be fun for students, and at the same time offer stimulating learning situations. Teachers could use the memorizing ability of their students by introducing drama (even plays or scripts of daily situations written by students) and role play into their classes.

The teaching aids we use which relate to what we are teaching and which students can sometimes make themselves are more valuable because of the stimulation and motivation they create than commercial aids which some schools might never be able to afford. My advice is that the teachers be trained how to use what they have available for teaching aids.

Another issue commented upon by everyone was the English proficiency of the beginning level teachers who must teach young students not only English as a language but teach all other subjects in English. Some of the teachers, as others put it, are those who have completed the

equivalent of an eighth grade education, and did not go to high school. Some have had no basic training in teaching and their command of the English language is poor.

The laying of a sound foundation is obviously very important but, to use the words of F A. French in his book on teaching beginners in West Africa, "this is largely in the hands of young teachers, some of them untrained or insufficiently trained, all of them naturally with little experience and many with an inadequate, uncertain knowledge of English."²

Many observed, quite rightly, that the trained and experienced teachers would prefer to teach in higher institutions of learning. They pointed out that these teachers feel it is degrading to teach at the lower levels with their qualifications because of the long long tradition that the elementary teacher is the one with the least teachers' certification. This is sad because in the United States in the school I taught at there were three teachers with their doctorate degrees teaching in the high school. Some might argue that there are more qualified teachers here than there are in Ghana. This is true, but there are enough qualified teachers whose place should be in the elementary level instead of where they are now in the high schools.

2. F.A. French, "Teaching English as an International Language", London, Oxford University Press

I remember too well the comments of an elementary head teacher whose two staff members were being sent to teach in a high school because they were good and well qualified. He said the Ministry of Education should realize the importance of laying a sound foundation, because if the foundation is not adequately laid in the lower levels the higher level teachers will never have it easy. They are only running away from something that will eventually catch up with them.

I have taught in a teacher-training college and I sometimes wonder about some of my students and what type of education they are going to offer their students. Their own language proficiency is low and they are barely able to express themselves correctly and their written English leaves a lot to be desired.

The Ministry of Education has been working toward upgrading the standard of the teachers. Pupil-teacher centers have been opened to give in-service training to untrained teachers but the effectiveness of this program is defeated because little or no supervision is given to these teachers to see what they are doing and there are no follow-up programs where these teachers can discuss their problems or successes. I think this is an important area that should be given some attention.

On the methods used by the African teachers in teaching English, everyone felt that some of the methods used are outdated. Some educational systems, they pointed out, still rely heavily on teaching of grammar -- sentence analysis and giving the function of each word in the sentence. Many also felt that the method used did not sufficiently stress the oral or spoken aspect of the language.

They observed, quite rightly too, that a lot of the students who have had eight to ten years of English are not able to express themselves in simple correct English because the language has not been taught for communication. Class participation is limited because students are afraid to speak the language lest someone laugh at their errors. Students sometimes did not ask questions because they might have no questions since they did not understand what was going on. Some teachers are angry when students say they don't understand something so students are afraid to ask questions.

3

A. Daun thought the teachers used methods which did not encourage students to ask questions because they might not know the answers. As a result a good part of the school day is used in memorization and repetition.

A lot of teachers, many said, resort to students' memorization of a lot of things which have no meaning at all to their students. Students just memorize these and reproduce them when asked. This, they observed, is one of the reasons for the low level comprehension of the students. Many of them are not able to read and pick out main ideas in an article or passage they have read. Many students are so used to memorizing that they cannot give their own opinion on some one else's view point. They also felt that if students are given questions which entail critical thinking and forming logical opinions they are completely thrown off their feet.

Many of the African teachers taught to the test because of the external examinations and students are so conscious of this examination, that they get upset if a teacher tries to divert from the terrible method of teaching to the test and to introduce aspects of teaching that will be useful to students all their lives. This is sad, they said, and unless the Ministry of Education works on a more progressive way of educating and testing their students, learning for them will only be to pass a test and after that everything is forgotten.

A. Daun in his article criticized the teacher-training colleges. He said they were inadequate and inappropriate. They did not expose students to techniques of teaching. They might have told students all about the evils of rote-learning but did not give them the techniques to prevent that or any other example of teaching some other way. He observed that the teachers teach the way they have been taught and even use some of the same materials their own teachers used. Most of the primary school teachers, he said, are left unaided and unsupervised.

I tend to agree with a lot of the things A. Daun said about teacher-training colleges. In fact the training colleges spend the four years of training trying to upgrade the level of education of the teachers in training and spend very little time teaching them how to teach.

Students come out of college with some materials but not enough of the tools to teach the materials with, so they resort to the lecture method, teaching from the materials they have got from college. Instead of exposing their students to a system of finding things out for themselves through assigned readings, then discussing these, criticizing views, debating and arriving at a conclusion, all these are shut off by the system of dictating old notes to students. Many teachers use the same old notes

and they continue to dictate these to all the students that pass through their hands. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is the external examination - it is the determining factor of their career.

Although students had to pass a student teaching examination as well, most of them put in a lot of work just for the examination and might never work half as much when they actually go into the teaching field. They use the same type of lesson plans for several years irrespective of what type of students they have in their classes year to year. This is possible because of the lack of supervision. The best thing to do to avoid this is to collect all teachers' note books at the end of each year and put them in an office. They could refer to them sometimes, but it shouldn't be made the "Bible".

In the teacher training colleges there are no specific method courses offered. There is a specialist education teacher who teaches courses in education. His courses comprise educational problems. Case studies, on students' failures Educational Policies of the Country, Development of Education in Ghana, and Lesson Planning. There is also a brief mention of Administration. Sometimes before student teaching practice each teacher gives students ideas of how to teach their specific subject. The history

instructor might give a demonstration lesson on teaching a topic. After the student teaching that is all- nothing more is mentioned of methods.

There are no specific times assigned to the teaching of reading, word recognition, phonics, games on consonants and vowels, pronunciation, spelling or vocabulary. And there is practically nothing on English for communication. Obviously teachers go out of college and teach the same dull way their fathers had been taught. It is of vital importance that teacher training colleges spend at least one year dealing with the tools students need for their work. There are many teaching techniques that I personally have picked up here which I had never been exposed to.

There is the tendency, perhaps, ^{to think} that everyone could teach if he knows the materials to teach. This is a very wrong notion because he needs both the material and the methods to get these materials across to the learner. In fact, this is as important as the material itself. If someone's native language is English it does not automatically follow that he could teach the language. He needs some methods or guide lines or techniques in teaching it. It is therefore very important that method courses be given a dominant place in the teacher training curriculum side by side

with the materials students need.

Some of the people I interviewed noticed the pressure that students in the primary schools have to go through. They are spanked if they get their work wrong or give wrong answers to questions. Students are therefore in constant fear. Teachers always blame the students; they never try to find out why the student does not spell the word right. The teacher does not examine her teaching techniques or the students' problems.

I spoke to a twelve-year-old girl - American - who went to primary school in Ghana. She was then eight years old. She said her teacher spanked everyone who got the spelling of words wrong or who got their math problems wrong. She remarked that she did not see the effectiveness of the spanking because it did not guarantee their getting it right the next day. She said the teacher never helped her understand better by using a different technique to make it easier for her to understand. "We were so many in the class", she concluded, "So she never bothered to help individuals with their problems, she did that by spanking the individuals."

Many of the people I interviewed expressed concern over the lack of workshop programs that bring teachers together to discuss teaching techniques, materials and other teaching

problems and how to solve them. Most of the teachers, once they get out of college, never take extra courses to upgrade their teaching techniques. Many of the older teachers feel that they have been teaching for many years in this way so they see no need for change.

I feel there is not much incentive for teachers to attend workshops. Even if they do they don't try to implement some of the new techniques they might have learned during the program because there is never a follow up to see if these teachers are trying these techniques. Many therefore feel it is a waste of time.

At times there are conferences for teachers to discuss issues. One or two members of the staff are sent to represent each school, but very often these representatives never have the opportunity to discuss what happened at the conference with the other teachers, because no such plans are made by the principal.

Two teachers I interviewed told me what many would call trivial reasons for encouraging teachers to attend workshops. A Peace Corps Workshop Program for African teachers was attended by a lot of teachers because in one case paychecks were withheld and could only be given out at the workshop. In another instance it was announced that Magic Markers would be distributed to the participants.

I therefore feel that if there are incentives to get these teachers to attend these workshops, they will. I have been very much impressed with the workshop procedure here in the United States. I shall discuss this fully in another chapter for improving the African system.

Suggestions for Solving the Problems Mentioned

Since there are many primary level teachers whose training is inadequate or whose command of the English language is shaky, it was suggested that pre-recorded lesson materials be provided for such teachers to compensate for such deficiencies.

Training colleges, instead of just concentrating on improving the trainees' English, should introduce them to techniques that are effective in aural-oral teaching. It would also be better if teachers are trained to teach specific courses to learn to know the course thoroughly and to rely on the techniques and teaching aids prescribed for it. Teachers' guides and materials should be provided for the inexperienced teachers.

A lot of the people I interviewed are of the strong opinion that English should be taught by teachers who have near native fluency in the language and that the oral aspect of the language should be emphasized, especially in the beginning level, since students will need the language throughout their courses and during the later part of their education. With a good command of the language, students will be able to participate in class discussions and form their own opinions.

In any country where a foreign language is taught, I am sure the system will be faced by the problems that the African nations are facing. Take for example, the study of Spanish and French in the American schools. Although some might argue that the goals here are different -- the teaching aims are the same. How many students who have taken these languages are able to express themselves fluently in the language as a near-native? Imagine then what it would be like if students here had to take all their courses in this foreign language. It is an unfortunate situation, but since Africans have to take their courses in English or French we have to find ways of helping our students get a higher level of fluency in order to succeed in their educational goals.

Africans are language learners; they are linguists in themselves and they are very flexible in learning a foreign language; these are the views expressed by many of the people I interviewed. It is up to the teachers, they said, using the appropriate techniques, to use these potentials in their students to help them speak the language instead of just teaching them the grammar of the language, as is the case in the higher study of the language.

Others felt that English teachers in the primary schools should be specialists and should have confidence in themselves and what they do. They should learn to use the facilities that they have, instead of the attitude, "We can't do as well as Americans and British because we don't have the equipment and facilities you have." It is advisable that teachers teach basic listening and speaking skills first and then the most advanced skills of reading and writing.

Another important suggestion was organising workshop sessions for teachers. These sessions could be on teaching techniques, reviewing materials, and discussing teaching problems and how to solve these problems. It could be a session where teachers can discuss teaching methods they have used and that have worked for them. This would give an opportunity to other teachers to pick up some good ideas.

In these sessions aural-oral methods should be emphasised. Teachers should be introduced to the use of role play in their classes. African students enjoy role-playing and teachers should take advantage of this in their teaching. At these sessions too, teachers should be encouraged to invite speakers to their classes, thus giving students the opportunity of practicing the

language, using it in a real situation.

English professors in the universities could be invited to these sessions to demonstrate other methods or techniques of teaching English.

Another session could be on reviewing English teaching books, developing materials and making aids for teaching. Teachers could also make contrastive analysis of the English language and the language of their students, so they could find some solutions to some of the English errors students make.

Workshop sessions could be organised to emphasize oral and written dialogues, debates, literary activities and directed discussions. Teachers should be introduced to controlled conversation, different techniques of teaching vocabulary (using games like Password, acting out words and so on) and teaching spelling. There are so many games in teaching spelling; teachers should be introduced to these instead of asking students to spell "dog" and spanking them if they get it wrong.

Teaching reading is another important aspect of a workshop program: Reading for comprehension, instead of just asking students to read words without knowing what they are, while the others doze away. It is therefore good to have a comprehensive reading workshop to help the inexperienced to find out ways of conducting a reading class. Again

different teachers or college professors could be invited to demonstrate different techniques.

Teachers could get together to discuss common grammatical errors, or words that cause problems for students, for example, the words 'waste and 'spend.' A lot of African students have problems with these. They say, "You wasted your time teaching us," when they mean to say, "You spent your time teaching us." Teachers could then formulate a plan to help students get over these problems.

Another aspect that needs great attention in both training colleges and at workshop programs is how to quiz students apart from the frightening situations students are used to in these African countries. What should be tested and how and why, should be important questions to be discussed. Tests should not only aim at testing the grammar of the language; included in the test should be testing for comprehension using interesting comprehension exercises. (Newspapers could be used.) Students could be tested by using discussion exercises or debates, and even through drama and role-play, or controlled exercises as in composition or conversation. Vocabulary could be tested through games like crossword puzzles, scrabble and even Password.⁴

4. A game of vocabulary describing words to an opponent using clues that will help the opponent to guess the words.

Teaching texts and materials, it was suggested, need to be given great consideration. Many criticized the texts used in African schools as being inappropriate to African situations. A text that describes situations that are far from what the students can relate to are inadequate, for example "The Circus in London" or "the Eskimos." Though the stories might be interesting the situation is very hard to explain. Very often there are no slides to go with these. Some of the vocabulary is hard to get across to the students because there are no substitutes for the words in the student's language.

I do not support completely the idea of totally Africanizing texts, but I feel that texts written for African schools, especially the elementary schools, should be written with the African child in mind and the vocabulary and situations used should not be too difficult for the student to comprehend.

Many suggest that the texts should be based on local situations. There should be a series of folk tales, since Africans have lots of folk tales. Exercises should be based on these readings. Students could also be made to role-play these tales. Posters and magazines could make important visual aids for English classes. They could be used for story-telling, for descriptive exercises and even for the study of tenses. More operational exercises could be

introduced where students are made to do things using the language. For example: How to Cook My Favorite Dish. Teachers could help supply the needed vocabulary for the exercises when students have problems continuing because of lack of vocabulary. Situations like this make an interesting class and other students are wide awake and there is participation by everybody instead of the traditional way of asking students to write a composition on how to cook their favorite dish; without guidelines or control. The result is often long strings of words with little meaning.

From my observation many elementary school teachers in our schools after they have gotten their college certification, never take any refresher courses or go to any extra courses to put them in line with the developments in new teaching techniques. Some of them, hardly read the new books being written on teaching and teaching materials. They therefore continue to use the old texts and traditional methods they were exposed to when they were students twenty years earlier.

I very much like the system here in the United States where teachers are certified for a certain number of years. To get a renewal they have to take extra courses or attend workshops where they can get credits for these courses. This certainly makes teachers work harder and they are, as a result, constantly in touch with developments in the teaching

field. New teachers are closely supervised and poor teachers are fired each year. This keeps everyone on their toes. If such a system is introduced in our schools and institutions, teachers will awaken to their responsibilities.

I also suggest that teachers should be given the opportunity to take courses by organizing such course programs, so that teacher don't have to give up their jobs to go back to college, as in the case of a lot of African countries. There should be night courses as there are in schools and colleges here. I think it is the lack of this that prevents teachers from taking further courses after college.

Teachers are very busy people, so in order to get them to come to these workshops, some sort of incentive should be attached to the workshops, such as getting credits for these courses or getting raises for attending a set number of workshops. It should be required of each teacher to take extra courses in their special fields or to attend workshops to get them acquainted with developments in teaching methods.

Supervision in our schools is very poor. In the elementary schools it is required of the head teachers in each school to supervise the teachers in their schools, but often these teachers also have their own full-time teaching classes, so no supervision ever takes place, and so the new teachers do their own thing in their own way.

Head teachers are supposed to give in-service training to unqualified teachers after school. This was supposed to be twice a week, I think. After eight hours of school no one could stay on for in-service training; this does not get done either. I feel that there should be some well qualified person who could act in that capacity and be of value to teachers through feed-back sessions.

Untrained teachers, who have to be hired because of a shortage of teachers, should be trained intensively for months before they are put into the classrooms and even then they should be made teachers' aides. Teaching with qualified teachers, they should be closely supervised.

One of the teachers I interviewed observed that supervision time in his school was very artificial. It is the time teachers do things they normally wouldn't do. They spend time marking the papers they had failed to mark for months. They gave extra work and had the students back date them so that the supervisor would see the out-put of work. Everyone in the school pretends that everything is fine. The Supervisor observes classes in session and writes down his comments but hardly talks to the teachers he observed. The comments are given to the head teacher who tells each teacher

what the supervisor's comments were. The reports are put in the school's file and teacher's file.

Each teacher wants to get a good rating so everyone puts on this artificial act; they then continue the way they had known until the next supervision - only God knows when. For the benefit of the students it is necessary that the Ministry of Education should see that a sound foundation is laid from the very beginning; for nothing stable can be built on an unsound foundation.

Many also criticized the attitude of qualified teachers not wanting to teach at the lower levels. Probably the best way to solve this problem is to adopt the American system of training teachers for grade school, elementary school or secondary school. Teachers should be trained for these levels and certified accordingly. This might help keep teachers where they belong.

Commenting on the external examination, it is interesting to note the views presented by all I interviewed. They observed that both teachers and students are very aware of these examinations. For the students their future depends on it. For the teacher the result tends to judge his ability as a teacher. The anxiety for these final examinations is great, and in the end few have a chance of passing.

Many teachers do all they can to make it possible for

these students to pass these examinations. In most cases teachers try to give answers to certain questions that are often repeated on these exams. Students memorize these answers and other questions and answers they guess might be on the paper. Those who are lucky to get their questions on the paper pass the examination because they have memorized the answers. Others who are not so lucky or had memorized answers to other questions which unfortunately did not appear on the paper fail. This happens a lot of times.

To all students these examinations present frightening times because if they fail the course they have to wait another year and many don't even bother to try again, unlike the situation here where students can retake the course during the summer school session.

Another time of anxiety is after the examination, because students have to wait for months for the results of these examinations. If examinations could be made less frightening, I think a better learning system might develop in our schools. The way the questions are put would also help. It should help develop students' critical discussive ability, and stimulate them to draw their opinions and give their judgements. Until I came to this country I never heard of "take home" exams or "open book" exams.

Examinations to me, and many others, are teachers

walking up and down the rows of desks and final examinations are policemen standing in or sitting at the entrance of the classroom. No one, not even the teachers and principals of the schools, knows what questions are on the papers until the day of the exam, when the policeman and the principal bring in the bag containing the papers. The policeman is there to make sure the bag was not tampered with and to make sure there is no foul play. The whole thing is therefore very, very frightening. I think it is this that makes the students memorize without actually understanding what they are memorizing. It is also this pressure that makes the teachers teach to the test. They give information to students without giving the opportunity to explore and find out information for themselves or discuss, argue and debate views. It is this anxiety that makes students tense and creates the necessity for uncreative teaching. Students are uptight about anyone who does not teach to the test. Unless the testing system is changed, I think there is very little anyone could do especially in the higher levels of high school and teacher training colleges.

In training colleges there is no oral test in English. I think this is necessary especially if these teachers are going to teach this in schools. They must themselves be aware of oral testing: What it entails and what to stress in their

teaching. Many feel that there is a lot of distortion in pronunciation. Perhaps this should be stressed in training colleges. C.E. Beeby⁵ suggested a pre-recorded lesson material for beginning teachers. I also feel that training colleges should emphasis in their English program "Listening and Speaking Skills" by using different teaching techniques. For example : Audio Lingual, Situational Reinforcement and Operational Situations. In other words they should stress oral-aural teaching techniques. Oral reading and comprehension skills should also be developed and tested.

Everyone I interviewed was impressed with the attitude of the African students toward them and toward learning. They are very respectful, they said. Some feel they are too respectful to the extent that they fear their teachers. They could never openly criticize or evaluate a teacher. One of the people I interviewed told me that when he asked his students at the end of the semester to evaluate his teaching they simply said "You are our teacher, you know everything. Who are we to tell you what to do?" Some were, however, disgusted about the attitude of the final year students. They reacted violently if they tried to put some variations into their teaching by bringing in language games or discussions, or anything that would divert from the usual and traditional way they are accustomed to. They would constantly ask, "Is

5. C.E. Beeby pp. 55-56

that going to be on the final paper?" Or "Are we going to be asked about that game in the final exams?" They are at this time very examination conscious. Unless the teacher understands the situations and what these exams mean for these students, he will be completely puzzled by their attitude.

CONCLUSION

I have tried, in this paper, to analyze the problems that need to be resolved in order to upgrade the teaching of English in our African schools. I have also tried to emphasize the teaching of methodology in our teacher training colleges, so that teachers who graduate from these colleges would go out with adequate tools to carry out their teaching career. I advised the setting up of workshop programs to give teachers the opportunity to hear, see and discuss new teaching techniques and develop teaching materials that will be beneficial to good teaching.

Supervision, I stressed, is of vital importance, and I advised that the system of supervision of new teachers in American schools might be implemented to suit our educational system, because almost all the people I interviewed felt, and I agree with them, that supervision is lacking in many schools.

Teaching texts and the materials used also had an important place in this paper, and suggestions were made for improving upon them. I personally feel that I have learned a lot from all the people I interviewed. The suggestions they made for improving English language teaching are important not only to myself but to others who might read this paper. It will be of some aid for language teaching planners in Ghana and give some advice to teacher training college advisors.

It will enable them to fill the gap in their English curriculum. I think it will open our eyes to what is wrong with our system and what should be done to improve it.

It will give to those who are planning to teach in African schools an idea of some of the problems and what they should expect.

Great changes are taking place already in our educational system. I know that even greater ones are going to follow, so that someday when all these teachers go back to visit these countries they would not believe the tremendous changes that have taken place.

In this concluding paragraph, therefore, I wish to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart for the time they took from their already crowded schedules to answer my questions and to share their thoughts and suggestions with me. I am most grateful for the honesty and open-ness with which they expressed their views. I hope they will someday see that I have not wasted their time eliciting information and suggestions that found their way into a waste paper basket.

I hope I shall be able to introduce gradually these fantastic ideas and suggestions into our system. I do not in any way expect a miracle; I am one out of many millions of Ghanaians, but good ideas should be accepted for trial; I hope my voice will be heard up there!

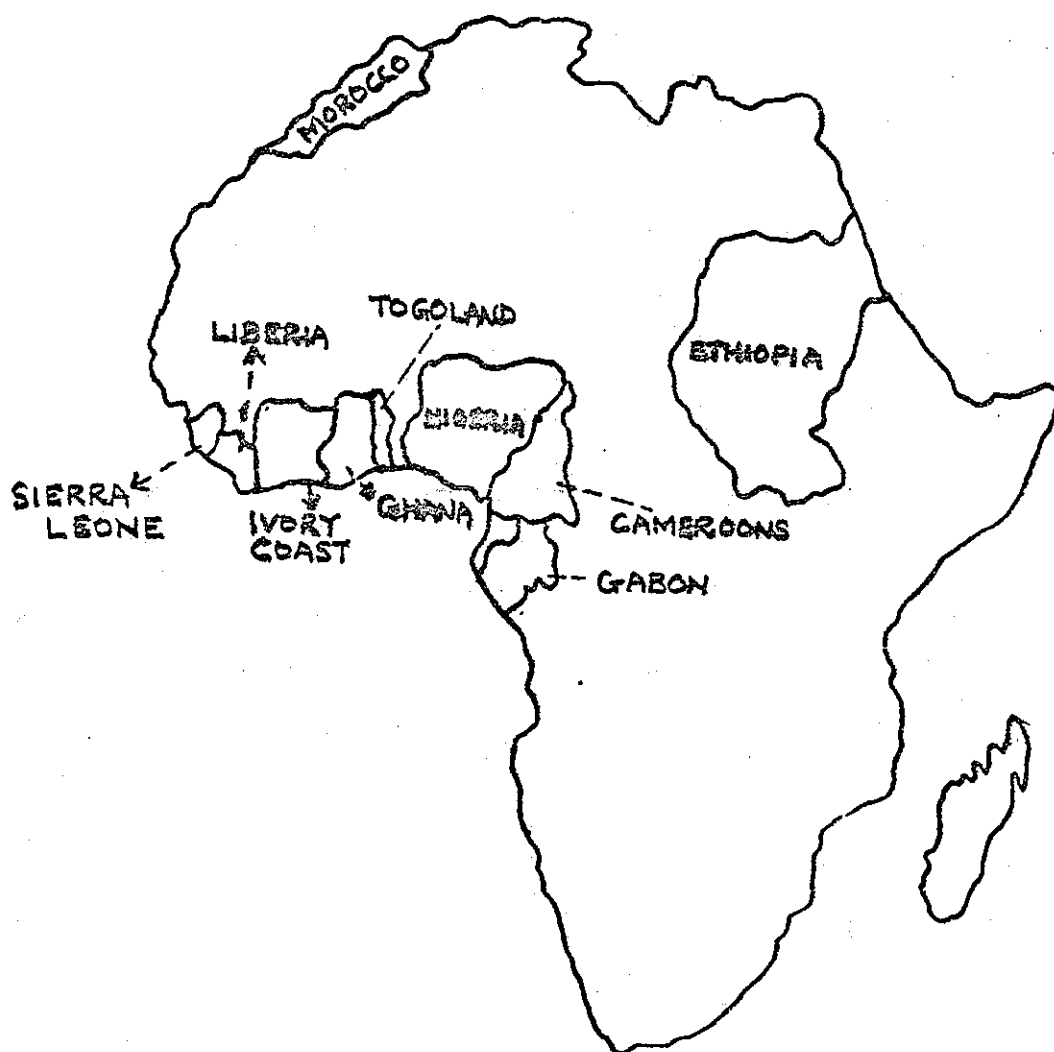
APPENDIX

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MAP OF AFRICA SHOWING THE COUNTRIES MENTIONED

IN THE REPORT



TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR TEACHERS WHO HAVE TAUGHT ENGLISH IN AFRICA

1. As a language teacher, what are your impressions about language teaching in the African country where you taught?
2. What problems did you encounter?
3. What are your feelings about the quality of the teachers who handle English language teaching in the beginning levels? Was there a lot of supervision for teachers especially untrained teachers?
4. What methods and techniques were employed? What were your feelings about these methods or method?
5. Did the teachers use teaching aids?
6. Would you say that the teachers relied on the text books or that they had a lot of variety in teaching style and materials?
7. What methods did you employ in your teaching?
8. What were you able to offer to these teachers? Did they in any way use some of your new techniques in teaching?
9. What was the attitude of the teachers towards you as a foreigner and your new techniques?
10. What was the attitude of your students towards you and language learning?
11. What are some of the suggestions you would like to make about language teaching in Africa in order to raise the standard of English learning and teaching in our schools?
12. In organizing a workshop for teachers in language teaching, what are some of the things you would like included in such a workshop program to help the teachers of beginning level students?

INTERVIEW WITH PETER GESSELL

Peter taught in Ethiopia for two years, 1962-1964. Now he is a member of the Board of Education in Cambridge and in charge of the Special Education Program in Framingham for Bilingual students.

Commenting on the students he said they were very enthusiastic and he did not have problems with them. He was a great curiosity as one of the first American Peace Corps volunteers in Ethiopia. There was a very strong practical reason for students to learn English. It was the language of instruction in secondary schools and would determine their entrance into the university. So it was critical. The students gave him more attention than he probably deserved, he said smiling.

He felt there was a great deal of pressure on these students because of the different examinations they had to pass.

In any professional capacity in the country they would need English as the tool for their work. They were therefore exceptionally interested in what was going on in the class. The language clearly has a great value to them, unlike French or Spanish in American schools, which has very little practical value to the average student. The students are highly motivated and diligent. Academic difficulty was the biggest problem. There were some students that were bright, privileged but lazy. He was treated courteously by the students

and he felt like a teacher in the school. He had a wonderful relationship with them.

About the English teachers he thought they tended not to talk to each other enough about techniques. The British teacher who was there had strong feelings about the grammatical structure and the need to go into the grammar, as - the British text they used, "The Write Out Series," focused a lot on this aspect of English. He definitely disagreed with some of the British teachers, because he had strong feelings about basic sentence patterns - building up a sense of the way words fit together and knowing the grammar by becoming familiar with the structures in different sentences.

He pointed out that there was some confusion because most of the experiences of the students in the primary school were very rarely with Ethiopian teachers. It was usually with Indian teachers who not only spoke with an accent but often spoke ungrammatically and so the students had varying pronunciation and not proper grammar as their fundamental experience before they met people who spoke English as their maternal language.

This was a great difficulty for many of the students who felt that somebody must be teaching them differently on purpose. "At times they were taught the wrong thing," he said.

Pronunciation was another big problem, because the Americans did not speak like the British, and sometimes had attitudes that were different. Peace Corps volunteers

are often too friendly with students at first against the norms of the relationship between the teacher and the students.

He found that teachers who teach preparatory classes for the final examination were greatly pressured. The examinations were not practical. He cited places like Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone where students get angry if the teacher departs from the syllabus, therefore teachers become slaves to the syllabus. Until the examination system is changed, he stressed little can be done about this attitude.

Peter taught in a teacher training college where he taught techniques and supervised his students at practice teaching and working in the practice teaching school they built in the neighborhood for the college.

During the summer, he wrote a book on the Teaching of English for Primary School Teachers. His focus was on sentence patterns. He felt that particularly in these early stages teachers should be given the proper tools to drill the students in sentences that are right and correct, proper grammatically and simple and which emphasize the various common sentence structures in the language. The other thing he tried to do in this book is to try to emphasize common Ethiopian mistakes with the English language. The fundamental errors were verb-noun-verb agreement. He said students had difficulty between singular and plural, e.g., this, these. They also had great difficulty with the third person singular -"He

go to school."

It was these common, rather elementary points that he worked on. He also pointed out that most of the elementary school teachers were not well trained or educated; there was little he could do about this but he could at least give them tools to make it easier and give them ideas on drills. He also found out that most of the teachers only had a small text which was all they used, so they did not have variety to what they did; students literally memorized the whole textbook. To prevent this, he worked with his students on how to use simple things in the classroom, and how to build from structures and have a sense of what they were trying to do. This he said was appreciated by a lot of the teachers and they had a better sense of what they were doing. He emphasized that although they were not sophisticated tools they were tools that they found useful. When he went back to Ethiopia to visit, many of the teachers who were formerly his students told him how much these tools have helped them. He found that some of them, when they tried to create their own materials or invent things, tend to teach the wrong thing, but with his book they had something to start with as a guide.

He encouraged a lot of drill at the elementary school level and he used oral drills, spent time correcting common English errors and using games in class. He also gave students extra credit questions on common errors and warned them to look out for these mistakes. He in-

troduced a game of how to avoid these mistakes. This did eliminate a lot of many speaking and writing mistakes particularly in writing the language. It made them conscious of grammar as a practical tool and not just a pain in the neck, or a silly set of rules.

On supervision, he said teachers did not get any, and the elementary school teachers were often those who did not have sufficient education, and therefore required it. Some of these teachers did not speak good English themselves and had very little knowledge of techniques. They taught students to memorize everything, and sometimes taught the wrong thing.

The marking system was also very inconsistent and at times students' correct answers are marked wrong because the teacher is not sure of the right answer herself, and students cannot challenge the teacher about their correctness. Teachers did not know how to teach sound discrimination and pronunciation. Sometimes students cannot understand the differences in sound or in the pronunciations of words.

Most teachers prepared very poorly. They used no aids but he feels they could do without these if they could make their classes come alive by their teaching, by making student use the language together to communicate.

He advised that teachers at the primary school level should use prepared lessons. This would prevent teachers from inventing wrong materials which might be detrimental

to their students, since they were not qualified enough to write their own materials without errors. He strongly advocates workshops for teachers, and supervisors at the beginning levels, where specialists are sent out to observe the work of these teachers and make suggestions for improvement. At these workshop sessions someone could develop new materials, because the whole situation is difficult when the teacher does not know the content very well. He thinks workshops could do a lot if the purpose is narrowed for elementary school teachers. The workshop could be divided to cover many areas; methods, writing composition, building vocabulary and reading materials, and how to avoid the common errors students make. Some other areas which should be dealt with at these workshop sessions are how to quiz students and how to make drills interesting without the frightening methods they are used to. Students should be encouraged to feel they can learn through mistakes, for example in spelling, by giving them the commonly misspelled words until they are mastered.

Another important issue that needs attention is correcting papers. Written work was greatly neglected. Some teachers gave exercises or tests but never corrected them so students learned their own mistakes, since they often did not get their written exercises back. Workshops would be very valuable in this area. The problem, however, is getting people to supervise and guarantee that they are properly attended.

Teaching in front of peer groups was an experience a lot of them did not expect. It was a little threatening but valuable. Other teachers pointed out what the teachers did wrong, and they corrected their mistakes.

He found that many of the teachers did not want to teach at the beginning levels but he feels this is the most important area that needs qualified teachers.

Reading classes are the most boring; all the teacher does is ask the student to stand up and read a paragraph. Students just read words without comprehending and the other students just look at their books partly listening or following what the student reading is muttering. It is therefore essential that techniques of teaching reading be stressed so that students can read for comprehension and enjoyment.

At the higher or intermediate levels he feels composition and writing skills should be given attention and controlled. He said teacher evaluation is a thing unheard of in African schools. When he asked his students to give an evaluation of his work, the students would say, "Who am I to criticize your teaching?"

It is necessary for teachers to see how important it is to get students' evaluation of their teaching. - He said the students are too polite to offend.

Another important thing beginning teachers need to use is a cassette tape recorder to help teachers discriminate between sounds, and to record correct pronunciation of words.

He made a comment on teachers' certification. He strongly feels that teachers should be required to attend workshops in order to get their teaching permits renewed. He gave an example of teachers coming to a workshop only because their paychecks were withheld and would only be given out at the session, so there was a large turnout for that particular session. He feels it is important that the Minister of Education show his face at such sessions to discuss administrative issues with the teachers, instead of just giving orders from above without familiarizing himself with the issues and problems in the schools.

INTERVIEW WITH HOWARD SHAPIRO

Howie taught in Ethiopia for two years. His problem, which was not unusual with Peace Corps Volunteers, was that he went to Ethiopia with his wife with no idea that he was going to teach English. He was supposed to teach biology but they both ended up teaching English. Although they did teach some social studies and biology the overwhelming number of hours, about thirty hours a week, was in English instruction. They did not have any idea of teaching English as a second language and no formal training. They were therefore not prepared and it was very difficult for them at the beginning. Faced with this situation they had to explore what resources and materials were available. All they found in the storeroom were British grammar books which were written for people studying in Britain. They found these inadequate.

The approach to teaching English in Ethiopia is very theoretical. Since Howard knew very little about grammar, he had to use the books because they were better than nothing. If he had had to create his own materials, he would have been totally lost, he said. Although he relied on the text himself he introduced some drills.

Commenting on the staff, he said he was teaching in a secondary school whose faculty was staffed by Indian and Peace Corps teachers; there were only about two or

three Ethiopians on the teaching staff.

The Indians, he noticed, when they did teach English used a very traditional approach. The elementary school teachers were those who completed secondary school and went to a teacher training college. These did not have a high level English reading ability. These teachers found it difficult understanding some of the instructions that went with the teaching aids. Even his wife, a native speaker of English, had problems; the aids were developed by British professors in very British English. These professors, of course, knew very little about the situation in this country.

There was very little of teachers' conferences or workshops where teachers could get together to compare notes or discuss new teaching ideas and techniques. He thought one of the reasons for this might be because the teaching staff was multi-national. Among the Ethiopians were people of different language groups and it was the policy that teachers not be posted to their own part of the country. This is not unique to Ethiopia. There was great tension among the different cultural groups and there was also tension among the Ethiopians and the Indians. Teachers were also very jealous of their own domain. They had this attitude "This is my classroom and what I do is my business. As long as I do my job, nobody should bother me; no one should criticize me. Any criticism is personally taken. A combination of these factors inhibits any exchange of ideas and communication.

The director of his school, who studied in the United States school and got his Master's degree, took the supervisory role but he did it in an authoritarian way. Howard said it was hard to believe that he had studied in the United States so long but was not influenced by the methodology here.

Each teacher, he said, was required to submit weekly lesson plans. These were handed in on Friday and given back Monday with comments. There was little communication between faculty or staff and the headmaster.

Generally, the head teacher, he commented did not know very much about English methodology. English as a second language is a very specialized endeavor that most people know little about. He himself had to learn this in order to teach it.

In Ethiopia, he pointed out that they have very traditional examinations in the sixth, eighth and twelfth grades and these are external examinations. The students are very much aware of these examinations; learning and teaching are geared so that students can pass these examinations. Generally the Peace Corps Volunteers did not agree with these examinations but there wasn't much they could do about it.

In Ethiopia with the diversity of educational standard ranging from the capital city to the tiniest remotest village, methods vary greatly. If the teacher was teaching something or using methods that to the students were

not appropriate for passing the examination they would react immediately, and would demand to know how that could help them pass the examination. He remarked that the external examination, the first year he was there, was really unfair. It was all grammatically oriented and was essentially objective. They tested grammar but did not test students' general knowledge of the language. During the second year, however, things were different. Although they still taught the grammatical structure it was more of the usage text. He also got along better with the students and was better prepared.

Some of his suggestions were that some of the texts be abolished or be rewritten, based on local situations that are meaningful to students. He said there was a series of readings on Ethiopian folk tales that came out about two months before he left. He wished he had had those earlier. These had exercises based on the readings. They had planned to develop a whole set of series for all levels. On the other hand, he said, he did not feel it was healthy to have texts that are entirely of Ethiopian environment. He would like to see a whole range dealing with African experiences and experiences from different parts of the world that deal with universal things.

He feels there is a great need for the use of visuals and this, he said, could be done at little expense. A lot can be done with simple posters and charts. In terms of methodology more operational things can be done. Certainly, he said, class size is a problem not only in teach-

ing methodology but in maintaining control.

Control, he said, is not so great a problem for an experienced teacher, but some of the Peace Corps Volunteers who had never taught had great problem in controlling their classes. The students, in the traditional system, are very respectful, more respectful than students in this country. Students speak at least two languages including English. Some know three or four languages and these are spoken by the students before they go to school. Instruction is in a national Ethiopian language at the beginning level. In the seventh grade English becomes the language of instruction. English instruction begins in the fourth grade. Within three years fourth to seventh grade students must master enough English to be able to cope with English as the language of instruction.

Students have a linguistic ability because of the situation. If only teachers could use the proper methods, it would be easier for students to learn English and to speak it fluently. Workshops are desirable, he said. During the period he was there, only once did they have a teacher training workshop. Groups of Peace Corps Volunteers ran a workshop. These volunteers, he felt, were not experienced enough or knowledgeable enough about the reality in teaching in the elementary school. He didn't think it was successful enough because it was an elementary teachers' workshop.

Here is a list of things he feels must be done at

these workshops.

1. Demonstrations: get a group of forty students so that it simulates the reality of the classroom.
2. In order to get the teachers to come to these workshops give them some sort of incentive - raise in pay or credits for the courses taken. He cited a situation in Ethiopia: In order to get teachers to attend a workshop they advertised that they were going to give out free magic markers just to encourage teachers to come. Some of the teachers used this to make visual aids.
3. Workshops, he said, should address the problem of methodology, Most workshops do not.

INTERVIEW WITH ANN HILFERTY

Ann was a Peace Corps volunteer in Western Nigeria, 1963-1964. She was totally inexperienced in the beginning. After her Peace Corps services she went to the University of California where she studied the teaching of ESL, and has had a great deal of experience in this field ever since. She has both taught ESL and trained others in the various methods of teaching it.

For two years she worked for the Peace Corps, training teachers who were going to teach English in West Africa. She spent another two years teaching English to high school students who were immigrants in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Since then she has been teaching in a number of universities in the Boston area; Harvard, Boston University, Northeastern and Wellesley College. In addition to teaching foreign students in these universities, she does consulting, counselling and teacher training.

She returned to Nigeria this summer and came back with different impressions than those she had ten years ago. She spent five weeks in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, and Sierra Leone as part of an American University Educators Program.

While she was in Nigeria, she was impressed with the teachers, their skills and competence, but she felt very strongly that their language training was inadequate. She was in two teacher training colleges. Her students

had secondary school education and two years of teacher training. She noticed that their English proficiency was not at a high level, most notably in pronunciation and vocabulary range. Ironically they were to teach all academic subjects entirely in English to the students of the elementary and primary schools. It was a dilemma, she felt, that could not be resolved by two years of teacher training. They were also hampered by the fact that they had to teach all the academic subjects, not just English; and the materials available were not updated and imaginative. These students were spending two years in a teacher training college to update their education and skills. The main objective is to prepare the students to pass the final national examination. She therefore found herself preparing the students for this examination by upgrading their speaking skills and giving them workshops in language teaching. She therefore feels that the elementary school teachers were expected to do too much and not adequately prepared; she gave an example of one teacher she thinks was the most fantastic she ever saw, had more magnetism for children than she ever saw, but whose language ability was very, very low. Certainly what these students were going to get from her in pronunciation, linguistics and sentence patterns would be low; she is sure that the students of this fabulous teacher learned a lot, but not much in the way of the English.

During her recent visit to West Africa this summer

she saw that Nigeria is trying to upgrade the qualification of the teachers, but prior to this she found that most of the qualified teachers feel it is degrading to teach at the lower levels, so the load of teaching in the primary school is put on the shoulders of the not so qualified teachers-where in fact the sound foundation should be laid.

One of the changes she observed was that the entrance requirements into universities were being slackened to make room for more students. She also saw that there is a recent trend to teach the first two or three years in the indigenous languages as opposed to English.

She thought it was very odd to see that young children come to school and are immediately plunged into a language which is not their own and in which they had to learn all the academic subjects; she is therefore happy at this new trend.

She, however, said that a lot of the university professors were complaining that the standard of education and the level of English proficiency are lowered. She feels that English is not a second language there since one could spend a whole day in an area without hearing a word of English spoken. Her personal opinion is that the trend should be toward upgrading teaching at the different levels with less reliance on English. African literature is also being introduced into the courses.

She met some West African examiners who told her that things were changing for the better and that the

examination is now testing students' oral ability in English.

Her impression of African students in the United States is that their greatest problem had been in pronunciation and in advanced writing, not in grammar, vocabulary etc. She would therefore hope that work is done at this level, especially in pronunciation. The other question is the writing of a long paper. Sometimes it did not sound like English at all in terms of logical beginning, middle, and end. These are their basic problems, she said.

Writing, she pointed out, is different from speaking. They have different rules. The grammar is the same, the vocabulary is the same but in writing a style is necessary. She strongly believes that for a comprehensive language program one should start with speaking and later go to writing; there is a relationship between speaking and writing and one does a better job teaching it, if at the beginning they are separated.

The African teachers, she pointed out, followed some of the methods described in the British textbooks; "they followed them pretty faithfully," she said with a smile. She felt, however, that they tended to stick to these methods because they know no other. This was their greatest weakness because no book, even the most up to date revolutionary fabulous language book, is satisfactory in itself. Any book has to be departed from, added to, and edited by a good teacher. The creative teachers

extended themselves to make audio-visual aids charts, although even these were suggestions given in the book. They never added their own ideas. Most of the books used are old-fashioned, very classical English texts. It is terrible if a textbook is totally out of touch with students' needs. She has also seen texts that emphasized the target culture, so to speak, and related still to the students. It is when the textbook speaks to the student as though he is the member of another culture that it is wrong.

Many of the teachers devised their own teaching aids. Some used the blackboard very effectively. Others were not very effective. The television sets she saw in the classes she visited in Nigeria did not work, but this could happen anywhere in the world. When they did work most of the English programs conflicted with the regular schedule of the class.

The general impression she had is that most of the African schools do not have the equipment the American schools have, but that does not affect the standard of education. She does not think equipment is the answer. Attitude of the teachers: she thinks they might have thought of her as someone who has the correct answer -- her English is O.K.-- that she could make no error, and so she was a kind of judge for them. She suspects that they felt that her experience was different from their own and might have wondered whether what she was teaching was relevant to them.

She strongly feels that certain things need to be improved in order to upgrade English teaching. One of her suggestions was that all English teachers should be specialists instead of the elementary school teacher who teaches all subjects. They should teach basic listening and speaking first and then the most advanced skills, such as reading and writing.

In her teacher training workshops - whether long or short terms she has always done some role-playing where teachers and students exchange roles. She gives them English problems to teach so that they will get the feel of either aspect, there will be a feed-back from everyone in the workshop. She finds it most effective to give a demonstration in a shock language to let the teachers themselves get a feeling for what it is to become exposed suddenly to a language which is totally different from English. She has also tried to demonstrate different skills in teaching and if possible brought in different skillful teachers, especially when they followed different methods because it is her opinion, she stressed, that no one method is the best. She also likes to encourage teachers to develop their individual styles, by only giving them a basis, and likes to demonstrate many techniques both traditional and otherwise.

In a long course she would have teachers make lesson plans and do supervised practice teaching when possible, among themselves.

She required certain readings about the philosophy

of language teaching, the structure of the English language, if possible a contrastive analysis between the English language and the students own.

In most cases she used the materials she had written herself and she also appealed to the different modes of learning in the individual students because everyone has different ways of learning. She trains teachers the way she would train students. She deals with reading and writing, role-playing, drama and conversation by getting the teachers to participate in her demonstrations as students, and by getting teachers to give demonstrations. She found this easy to do especially in reading and writing exercises. She does a lot of controlled exercises - composition - especially with beginners. She feels it is important to distinguish between free and controlled activities whether in reading or writing. She gives students controlled composition and oral drills. These activities she finds inspiring at the most advanced levels for the prospective teacher.

Commenting on the examinations, she said the students panicked terribly because they know only very few students would pass. She feels the examinations need to be improved because it is in this way that the system of teaching will improve.

A good language workshop, she advised, should include oral and written dialogue activities; pattern practices, debates and literary activities, traditional writing, drills and controlled writing drills, discussions and

lots of sample examinations. She used a lot of verbal games, oral and written, and she feels that teachers should be introduced to these to help them bring some variation into their teaching. She encourages class trips and inviting people to talk to students to make a genuinely interesting speaking situation.

INTERVIEW WITH RAY CLARK

Ray taught English in a teacher training college in Nigeria for two years. He feels that Nigeria is a good place for language teaching and language teachers because Africa on the whole is a continent where there are so many languages and so many different kinds of sources. It is a real melting pot of languages. It is almost a linguist's paradise. Africans he said are language conscious in general. People depend a lot on spoken words.

Commenting on the problems, he said class size was a problem, and this made it difficult to reach students on individual basis. In the primary school the class size was too big.

He also observed that teachers believe too much in the syllabus because of the external examination.

Although Ray was teaching in a teacher training college, he supervised his students on their practical teaching assignments. He found that the level of English in the primary level is fair but there is room for improvement. His students he said were trained to teach in the upper levels of the primary grades but most of them did not want to teach at these levels. They preferred to teach in the secondary school.

Oral exercise, he observed, was used out of necessity in the primary school because they did not have enough texts or, if they did, they were short of certain pages.

Commenting on methods, he said there was some trans-

lation and quite a bit of choral exercise..

There were no visual aids in the schools but his students brought in a lot of things from the environment as aids while they were practice teaching. Regarding texts, he feels there is need for lots of improvement in the upper level in the literature courses. He said during his first year there the syllabus required them to teach Shakespeare, Silas Marner, and all other foreign stories and texts, but during his second year this changed considerably. The Ministry of Education introduced books written by African writers like Chinua Achebe and Ekwensi.

In the primary level he thought the texts were o.k. but the problem was with the teachers following the texts closely and not supplementing them. On the attitude of students he observed that some students were not proud of the way they spoke English. They thought that the British English is the only correct way and the American English is second. He smilingly said some of the students would occasionally correct him telling him his English was not so good.

In suggesting ways of improvement he advised that teachers should not rely on equipment. and that they cannot do anything without equipment . They should do well with what they have. He remarked that some of the teachers would tell him that in America they have the language laboratory and "this situation in our poor humble continent, poor texts and materials must seem

awful" to him. He feels that it is a terrible attitude that must be changed and he often told them that what they are doing is right for their country and time. They should not look to Britain or America or base their teaching on what these foreign countries do but they should do what is right for their country and have confidence in themselves.

He advised that teachers use the dramatic potentials of their students by introducing role-play situations in their teaching. The teachers should set a controlled situation where students could talk in the language while she picks out the errors that the teacher could work on. He also encouraged conversational drills.

He advised that writing and reading skills be improved in the intermediate level. They should stress reading a passage critically and picking out on their own what was essential in the passage and the chief ideas in the passage. Insignificant writing should also be controlled and composition and comprehension skills need to be improved.

INTERVIEW WITH DAVE REIN

Dave taught English at the University of Liberia for one year, 1964-65. His students were older than those here in the United States because most of them worked before coming to the University. He was therefore very shocked by the low level of their English performance. He remarked that out of all the students he had there was just one who could write English like a native speaker of English, although English is an official language there. The level of their reading and writing corresponded to a fifth grade level in the United States. He therefore found himself teaching English as a foreign language.

The level of comprehension was really very low. He often read proverbs or sayings to them, because he discovered that they had a lot of proverbs in their native language. He then asked them to write what it meant. He told of an interesting incident in his class. He dictated this proverb to his students "Miss not what's near through aiming at what's far." He asked them to write what it means. One of the students wrote down: "Miss not was out in the garden one day just behind her father's house." And he went on with the experience she had in the garden. This student had no idea what the proverb meant. Some students he said could not even form the letters of the alphabet properly, so that he could recognize them.

He was impressed by the facilities in the teacher

training college there. Most of the students in training were experienced teachers who had taught and were now coming back, for high courses, so their inability surprised him. He feels strongly that teachers should be trained at the primary school level, because they are the ones who need the most careful training which will reverse the present system, because he observed that most well trained teachers prefer to teach at the upper level but that isn't where they are needed. They are needed rather at the lower level where if a strong foundation is developed that will go a long way into solving the problems at the upper levels. In the institution he mentioned the teachers were being trained for the lower primary school levels.

Commenting on texts, he said they were entirely American and used in American Universities. He found that they were inappropriate for Liberian students. He cited an example of a chapter on a mountain in New Hampshire which did not have any relevance to the Liberian student:

They did a lot of memorization. For this reason students are not accustomed to thinking at all or being critical. He found that the students had not been taught to be critical about English and they were not analytic.

Among some of the useful suggestions he made were: To get the ministry to staff the primary school with well trained teachers. It is there that a strong foundation should be laid. People who are going to Africa to teach

should probably realize that they are going to teach English no matter what their speciality, because he went to Liberia knowing English was the formal official language but not realizing what kind of English was spoken.

He strongly advised that those Africans who go to foreign countries to study make it a point to go back to their countries to help raise up the standard of education or the progress of the country in their field of study. He said very often such people who do go back are asked to head offices in the Ministry of Education where very little use is made of their practical experience.

He encouraged a get-together session of teachers to discuss teaching and techniques, and to offer suggestions for improving the problems of learning in the schools. They should develop a creative way of viewing the text books.

The educational system is patterned after that in the United States. The courses taken are like courses you would take in the United States, the tests, the system of administration, the class attendance, the number of hours given to a course were exactly the same as in the United States. It seemed better to adapt teaching to their own system so that it would fit more usefully into their own society and background, instead of just importing a system wholesale from another country.

INTERVIEW WITH KAREN BLANCHARD

Karen taught in Ethiopia, East Africa, for two years in a small secondary school. The teaching staff was made up of Americans, Indians, and Ethiopians. Teaching methods varied greatly.

In her class she did a lot of oral work. In other classes she observed it was mostly in terms of memorization of materials. The students expected a certain amount of memorization. She accepted their needs for memory work while she introduced methods she thought were more proper method for language acquisition. She would give students a list of vocabulary for memorization and then test them. She found that this made students very comfortable.

She said there was conflict because the students had been learning British English and they also had been taught English by non-British speakers, by Indians and by Americans; so there was the problem over pronunciation. It made it too difficult for the students.

She found that she had to re-teach almost every day. Most of the students had the ability to acquire languages but the methods used were a bit regressive. She herself did a lot of oral work but it was very difficult because the classes were too large, and little could be done orally on an individual basis in forty-five-minute periods. It was important at that point to listen to mistakes and to correct them. She spent some

time on reading, depending on what the needs were, she said.

She noticed that most of the teachers taught to the text. She said it was difficult because these students had to pass a test at certain levels in order to go on. What the Ministry might consider a reasonable language acquisition was sometimes completely different. The examinations she observed were memorization based and were inapplicable in the area of language learning. It consisted of analyzing sentences - things a native speaker might not consider to learn or even know. She gave students tests that were situational so that the tenses could be treated.

Often students found it difficult to grasp.

Commenting on texts Karen said she wrote her own material based on situational reinforcement and transformational method of language approach, but most of the texts she said were British texts--grammar, nothing in the area of oral text except for students reading it.

She taught the definition of parts of speech to meet students' needs. She tried to make them understand the concept. She used the texts to satisfy students' needs of having a book and the need to do an exercise from the book.

She also used a book with her sixth grade students that had some relation to Ethiopian culture but most of the other books were about the "Empire State Building," "Buckingham Palace," and the "Marathon Race." She said

she found it even difficult to explain the "Merry Go Round Circus." She tried to describe it; that was all she could do; but the students did not understand what the chapter meant.

When asked about the attitude of the students toward her, she said she felt very embarrassed when students would stand up when the teacher came in and would remain standing until the teacher told them to sit down. Some of the students, she said, were two years older than she was. She observed that respect was incredibly high because students feel they are privileged to be in school. Motivation is incredibly high.

Among the suggestions she made for improvement were that the examinations for language learning should be totally different from those of the other subjects like history and geography. The examination should be much more oral in content for certain levels. Classroom work should be almost completely oral in the lower levels.

A good reading program should be set up and class size should be drastically reduced.

Workshops should be organized to share good ways of teaching and the new techniques of language teaching. Emphasis should be in acquiring more skills in oral work, testing and curriculum development.

There was practically no supervision in the schools, she said. She therefore advocated more supervision, and encouraged peer supervision, peer exchanges to share ideas. She thinks the teachers are great but they just need

better teaching methods and variety in their way of teaching. This she thinks is what the Ministry of Education should look into.

INTERVIEW WITH PHILLIP STANTIAL

He taught English in Sierra Leone for two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer , 1969 - 1971

He was teaching in a primary school in classes five and six in a small town up-country in Sierra Leone. He had very large classes of about fifty students, with little or no materials. What one is sure to have every time is the blackboard. He said there was often a shortage of papers, and as for texts, one for three students.

He said all the English books they had were from England, and that the children could not relate to them. The English in these books was proper British English. He himself found some of the books very boring and uninteresting, and students often did not understand the stories because they were too remote from their imagination.

Later, he said, Sierra Leone made reading books available that had more significance to the students and related to their environment. He thought these books were much better but they were too difficult for the level of the students. About the methods of teaching of the African teachers on his staff, he said he realized that all the other teachers depended heavily on teaching students to answer past examination questions in preparation for the common entrance examination which qualifies the students for high school. He said he found out that these examination were the same as those taken by their

counter-part in England. He felt this was ridiculous and very few students pass these examinations anyway. He remarked that the passing grade had to be lowered from time to time and even so, few managed to pass.

Many of the teachers relied on reading and writing and filling in the blank type questions rather than teaching for communication. He felt most of the students were bored in their English classes because there is no variation in the class. It is the same old stuff each day. He noticed that in the other classes the students lacked creativity and they lacked materials through no fault of their own. He feels there is a need for teaching aids, new and exciting techniques of teaching and more work on teaching English for communication.

He, however, put in a word of praise for some of the teachers who tried to do a good job with what they had, but he concluded, it is difficult to do a lot with only the blackboard. He smilingly told me that his head-teacher got angry with him for using so much paper in his class.

In conclusion he noticed that there were even fewer of the Sierra Leone texts than the British texts. The American texts were dated from the late thirties or early forties and were out of use in the countries they were imported from. He often wrote his own materials because he found most of these texts inappropriate.

On the question of teachers' qualification he said some of the teachers were trained and qualified but a lot of them were people who had just a high school diplo-

ma with no basic training at all. These teachers, he noticed, did not really know what or how to teach. He also observed that there was practically no supervision for these teachers. All they did was come to class, stand in front of the class and talk for hours on end, or give notes to students, which they copied and memorized without understanding what it all meant.

He observed that there were no workshop programs for these teachers to introduce them to some basic teaching methods other than the one method they are used to. He organized a workshop session for primary school teachers in his town to introduce some of the methods of teaching English that the American teachers had been exposed to. Teachers attended this session, listened to what was going on and took part in the sessions, but he noticed that most of the teachers did not use any of the ideas they were exposed to. Some just tried it once and not feeling comfortable with a new method, went right back to their old and traditional custom.

To the question about his relationship with his students and the other teachers in his school, he said he was a novelty in his school. He found his students interesting and he liked them. He felt that most students enjoyed being in his class because he is white and he spoke differently from the other teachers. He, however, found it a little difficult to tell a sixty-year-old teacher who had been teaching for thirty years to change his traditional methods, which they naturally resented.

Phil made some suggestions towards improving the present standard of teaching English, but he added that he does not know if it would work because this would mean expenses.

He suggested that the number of students in each class should be reduced for more effective teaching. To prevent all teachers from wanting to teach in the secondary school, he said perhaps it would be better to train teachers specifically for the levels they would like to teach, since only few teachers want to teach in the primary school because they feel it is less prestigious.

He also suggested that there must be some serious thought given to the examinations because too many teachers rely too heavily on just preparing students for these examinations through working on past questions with the result that students don't get a wide variety of knowledge. Memorization therefore is the entire system of learning. So it is very difficult for students to answer practical questions like what they thought about a poem, what it meant to them and how it relates to them. They found it difficult because they had not been taught to be creative and to express their views or discuss their points. So it is difficult to get them to say what they thought and not what the teacher thought or what the book expressed. He emphasized that teachers should use methods that would enable students to use the English language through discussions, debates and expressing their viewpoints.

He suggested that there should be a better system of supervision of teachers instead of the artificial one he was exposed to when he was in Sierra Leone. During the official inspection the teachers did what they normally didn't do. They pretended that everything was alright and the head-teacher asked all the students to dress neatly. They put on an act to please the supervisor.

INTERVIEW WITH MARY CLARK

Mary taught English for two years in Nigeria in a girls' secondary school. She taught at the lower levels because the Nigerian graduates she taught with preferred to teach the higher grades. The classes were very large.

The greatest problem was students' consciousness of the final examination. Students, she said, were so conscious about this examination that they wanted the teaching geared specifically to the examination because they feared they could not pass it. Her impression was that if the students had learned English well they would not have to fear so much. Sometimes, she said, they wanted her to teach specifically to the examination. That was one of the reasons why she wanted to teach at the lower levels; they were less concerned about the examination at these levels.

Commenting on the teachers, she said they were mostly qualified but there were a few untrained teachers with only secondary education. These teachers were not very sure of themselves so they often gave notes to the students. They did not want to discuss things because they were afraid they might not be able to lead such a discussion or they were not confident enough to give right answers to questions students might ask. She was, however, impressed by the way some of the graduate teachers brought creativity into their classes. She observed that the School Certificate examination had tested on

understanding of grammatical analysis. Students were asked to recognize adjectives, nouns, adverbial clauses and subordinate clauses. Some of the teachers who had grown old in this system found it difficult to change.

The new West African examination stressed that students should at least use the grammar of English correctly. The Ministry of Education was therefore trying hard to bring in changes in the methods of teaching and to introduce new texts with African background.

A good Canadian educator gave a workshop on teaching methods, and Peace Corps teachers had a workshop on curriculum development. Many of the teachers in the schools quickly switched to the new teaching approach. Instead of talking about the language, they were teaching students to speak it and use it through the oral approach.

One of the teachers expressed her impressions about the new teaching approach with these words; "It is fun to teach English now."

The students are very used to memorization and enjoyed choral exercises which is common in the African society and among politicians. She found that some of the African teachers employed these potentials in the class.

For example, the teacher would say a sentence like "The wicked man was captured by the police. Who was captured by the police?" and all the students would answer "the wicked man;" "Who captured him?" "The policeman." Mary said she used this technique in her classes

sometimes.

She therefore advised that modern teaching methods that were natural to their grammatical ability should be explored.

In suggesting improvements in the system, she said there is a great need for improvement in the primary school system, especially with the quality of the teachers at these levels. She said it was unheard of to have a graduate teacher in a primary school. If therefore they succeed in getting well trained teachers at these levels it will help students a great deal. She noticed that most of the students who got into the secondary school at the ages of twelve and thirteen did not understand the English language very well. The students worked very hard but still their English was not up to standard, first because students did not speak it and secondly because they were taught by teachers who themselves did not speak English very well. She said it was so disgusting to hear student - teachers drilling their pupils in sentences that were not correct. If the students are to be good in the language later she suggests that the children be taught by well trained teachers when they are quite young.

She knows that it would be really hard to persuade well qualified teachers to teach at the lower level. A tradition has been built up that a well qualified teacher would not teach in the primary school.

She feels so sorry, she said, for students who have to

learn chemistry, mathematics and history in English and do not understand what it is all about because their English language is too poor to comprehend the subject matter or the problem. Africans are natural language learners and if teachers had confidence in themselves and used the proper techniques they could be good language teachers too.

She said there had been some resistance from both students and their parents over the introduction of African literature books because they thought they were not as good as the British or American texts they had been using; but these ideas are fading away gradually.

She found that the students were happy to have European teachers because they thought that since they were Europeans they must be better than their African teachers.

This is a sad situation and she advised that if Africa is to take its place in the modern world, then Africans must come to trust themselves to be able to do things as well as the Europeans and even better. It is confidence in themselves that matters, she concluded.

INTERVIEW WITH BETSY WARNER

Betsy taught in Anecho Togo in a Methodist secondary school, in the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth grades. She taught all four years of English.

The school system in French speaking West African countries is taken directly from the French system, she observed. It was in the process of being modified at the primary levels while she was there. The secondary school curriculum, she said, was identical with what was being taught in France. All the texts were directly from France.

On methodology, she said the main emphasis was on translation, translating French to English and vice versa, and also in preparing students for college. The students she observed were studying French literature, history and geography, but practically nothing on Africa. This was being modified slightly, she emphasized.

Basically what she did with her English class under these circumstances was to create her own teaching materials and to put these into the African context. Instead of the supermarket, she would deal with a market day in Anecho. She would, for example, create a market scene and bargain with the market women, creating a real life situation for the students. She also developed vocabulary that was useful in the African context.

When I asked her whether the teachers on the staff appreciated the innovations she made in her teaching

techniques, she said on no occasion did any of the teachers or the director of the school come to visit her classes. The only supervision she ever had was from the Peace Corps representative who came once each year to supervise.

Commenning^t on the African teachers, she said there was a Togolese fellow who taught English and he had a high school diploma, but did not feel comfortable in speaking English at all. She always talked to him in French, because he resisted any attempt to speak English with her. She also observed that the Ministry of Education was becoming concerned about the emphasis on the oral aspect of the language rather than on the translation method. So they tried to get Togolese teachers to teach English.

The teachers had a very distant relationship professionally. There was nothing like getting together to discuss methods of teaching or developing materials. Her Togolese counterpart, she observed, resisted her suggestions. He felt uncomfortable or incompetent as far as teaching the language or speaking it was concerned. The Togolese teachers spoke a lot of French during their English classes.

The students, she observed, did a lot of rote learning or memorization. There was also the punitive type of environment. If they did not do their homework, they had their ears pinched or they would be spanked, so students studied out of fear of punishment.

There was not much student participation in the class because they are used to getting information from their teachers. They, however, respond very openly to the idea of participating in class discussion if the teacher so desires. They also enjoy role playing and all other sorts of active involvement. Many African teachers ignore this important tool of teaching.

On texts, she said, they had texts that were published in the fifties in France on how to talk to their London counterparts. She said she used some of the vocabulary in situations relevant to the Togolese students. Betsy made some useful suggestions in upgrading the level of teaching English in the schools. She said at the end of their service some of the volunteers said that what might be useful was, instead of volunteers teaching English, they should organize teacher training workshop for the teachers. She, however, said this was a delicate question in a lot of ways in West Africa because how you teach a language and how it fits into the school system has ramifications for how they perceive their national development. Until a country like Togo, she said, is able to make their own development that would vote them out of the French empire, they are not going to have a lot of innovation in the curriculum or teaching techniques. As long as the goal, she continued, is to achieve status in the eyes of the French, and as long as their aim is to send the students to French universities they have to use their techniques.

If, however, they can decide that their goals are to develop their country and to teach things that are relevant to their current needs, this would go a long way into developing the system. If this is realized then they would stress the need for oral language and not translation. Togolese students, she said, need to be able to go to Ghana and vice versa, and need to be able to communicate with people and not just to translate sentences. If the Togolese are able to reassess their priorities and values then there would be a lot to do about changing the techniques and the contents of what is taught.

She described the school system, saying when children enter the primary school they may speak one of four languages. They are taught French from rote memorization. In the seventh grade they must learn English whether they like it or not. When they enter the tenth grade they must then take German. All of these they learn only partially just by translating. Those who don't go beyond the tenth grade, have no use for all these languages.

She stressed that it is very important to realize that the students are very open and responsive to what the teachers have to offer them or the climate the teachers set.

Teachers should therefore, she advised, be clear about the priorities and values they are exposing students to.

If the definition of success in school is memorization of a text book, that is what the students will do because they are very eager to learn. If the teacher is also concerned about developing the ability of the students to think creatively, independently and critically then they would develop these skills. It is so important for them to get that secondary education that they would accept whatever the teacher indicates is the appropriate value.

In order to have students develop these skills there should be generation of teachers who feel comfortable with discussions and don't feel threatened when students challenge them on an issue. She emphasized the value of field trips in language study by taking students to a situation where they can use the language outside the classroom walls. She took them to Ghana for a couple of days. The most amazing thing for the students is that they are mingling with Ghanaians, asking directions from policemen and buying or bargaining with market women using English as the medium of communication. It immediately struck the students that English is a language to communicate with and not just an academic exercise.

She would, if she had to do it over again, take more initiative of talking to her Togolese counterparts of what they could achieve using the world as their classroom, because she strongly feels that they are not familiar with or comfortable with the idea of using the environment as a teaching aid.

She advised that teachers should not rely on the text book but should use different sets of exercises, communication exercises, participation exercises, traveling and visiting places where they have to use the language. It is advisable she said, that teachers challenge students to think. If they are to write a composition they should be given a topic that would stimulate their critical thinking potentials.

She observed, as many of the people interviewed did, that Africans are natural linguists, their ears are very sharp and they get the drills and expressions very quickly. It is very sad, she said, that teachers should pound these vitalities out of their heads by pounding in all the grammar rules.

INTERVIEW WITH JOE BENNETT

Joe taught in Gabon and Burundi in equatorial Africa. Formal instruction is usually in a European language in these countries throughout the system either in the lower or higher levels.

Joe was teaching English as a foreign language; the official languages are French and Kikundi. French is the language of instruction. Teaching and learning English is a luxury for these countries; only the rich countries can afford to get teachers to teach English.

These were some of the impressions he got while he was teaching in these countries. The government-supported schools were richer than the missionary secondary schools. They did not have enough textbooks or teaching materials. In Burundi he taught in a small university.

He said it was very difficult to get students, who are used to a system of education that emphasized memorization or rote learning, into a system where they have to learn to understand and to express their own opinion.

Speaking on texts, he said in Gabon all the textbooks were imported from France and these were not culturally related to the students' background. Most of them, he said, were outdated, so they emphasized grammar, memorization of rules and translation, which minimized need for speaking or understanding the oral or communicative aspect of teaching language.

He also commented on large classes as did all the others I interviewed. Student participation was very little because they are used to their teachers being the absolute masters and giving them all the information they need. They don't see it, he said, as a two-way communication.

He observed that all the teachers above the primary level were Europeans. In Gabon there was just one Gabonese teacher of English, but in Burundi there is a teacher training college in the capital city that was turning out English teachers who have been trained by a Scotsman. These teachers were given a combination of oral training, material selections and writing.

The director of his school, he said, objected mostly to the noise in his class. He wanted to see the students sit quietly in class; so any activity brought the director to the doors of his class.

Here are some of the suggestions he made toward improving the system.

1. Native speakers of English or people near native fluency should be employed to teach the language.
2. The teacher training colleges should be in a position to train teachers to teach the language for communication.
3. There should be more flexibility in the system so that new methods could be incorporated in the old system teachers are used to.

The policy of copying wholesale a foreign educational system, he stressed, is very dangerous; even more so when schools are not open to change unless it comes from above or from the Ministry of Education.

He strongly feels that beginning teachers should be given help in analyzing texts, sequencing the grammatical structure, system of organization - how much to present it. Oral contribution, he said, helped his students a great deal. He feels that it is an effective way of teaching a language. He also advised that teachers have confidence in themselves, in what they can do and also think of what they could do without a text. He said African teachers have an advantage over their European counterparts because of the contrastive analysis of both languages and even sometimes translations where it is absolutely necessary, he added.

He advised that training colleges should work hard on improving the teachers' English. They should also emphasize methods of teaching the language. Teachers should also take into account the fact that Africans are very flexible in learning foreign languages, so they should use these potentials.

INTERVIEW WITH CATHY TANSEY

Cathy Tansey taught in a town in Morocco on the Moroccan Algerian border. She taught English as a foreign language. The methods used here, she said, were not the types she was accustomed to thinking about or working with. They used the old French style method. The teacher stands in front of the class and the students sit down writing away immediately. The students also memorized materials a great deal, simply memorizing and not questioning the material or making relations between courses or things they had memorized.

She noticed most of her students could speak about four or five languages and English would be about the sixth. She noticed there was a lot of translation. She found herself going back to French or the students' language when she was explaining a new concept in the new language - English.

Speaking about the African teachers, she said the majority of the teachers still continued with the old system of English teaching with emphasis on the grammar rather than expression. She noticed, however, that many of the Moroccan teachers were trying to get away from the old system and use new techniques of teaching. There exist, she pointed out, the old ideas of discipline and the idea that the teacher knows it all and the students don't question what they learn or are made to learn.

Commenting on teaching aids and texts she said not many teaching aids were used and the school never had sufficient books or texts; three or four students had to look at one book,. A lot of the teachers, she said, did not use audio-visual materials, not even pictures, magazines or newspapers.

Some of the Peace Corps teachers organized a workshop session in which these teachers were encouraged to use teaching aids such as magazines, newspapers and games to liven up their classes and to be more inventive and imaginative in class. The Peace Corps and the British Council also helped in passing out materials in the teaching of English as a second language, and in testing. These volunteers also showed a few interesting things that could be done in class to bring in some variations.

Some of the African teachers, she noticed, tried these new techniques and ideas while others did not care. Some were interested in looking at the new books the volunteers had brought, she said, while others went right back to their old method of approach.

As to her relationship with her students, she said it did not take her a long time to establish a cordial relationship between herself and her students but there were certain things she had to tell them not to do. For example she said it is the custom for students to stand outside no matter what type of weather it is - burning hot or very cold-until the teacher asks them to go in to their classrooms. She told her students to go in

without waiting for her orders. It took them some time to get used to the idea of just walking into the classroom. She also noticed that students were a little confused at her teaching approach in the beginning because they were used to writing and memorizing, but after a while, everything worked out well. The students were eager to learn new things and once they got used to the idea, they enjoyed it a lot. They responded very well to the idea of doing things and being really very creative in class; but she was not sure about the practical things she did in class, especially when they dramatized and worked orally together or role-played.

She did not rely on written tests as many teachers did. She tested students orally. She also used their memorizing abilities to teach poems or rhymes, or to act plays, which they really enjoyed.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS:

She thinks one of the most important things is to get the teachers together where they can share ideas, promote certain books or texts that can be helpful, encourage more communication and evaluate testing. Get teachers to correct a paper and later discuss the differences in grading. Summer courses in methodology of teaching should be organized to discuss important techniques and texts with teachers. Teachers, she advised, should be a community within themselves, exchanging ideas that have proven successful in their classes. She observed that students in Morocco are very enthusiastic

and creative and if the teachers could use these aspects of their personality, it would really help a lot in bringing a lot of life into the English classes. It is very important for the teachers to realize the fact that students trust them very much so they should teach in a way that would be beneficial to their students.

Talking about texts she observed that her students were most interested in reading Mark Twain's texts and other foreign texts and some of these were far from what students could imagine. But she would recommend a blend of texts. Peace Corps have translated some Arabic folklore into English and used Moroccan mythological characters in plays and conversations and students really enjoyed these.

INTERVIEW WITH JAN WORTENDYCK

Jan taught English as a foreign language in the Cameroons in a public high school. She feels there is a great need for teachers of English, because most of the teachers who were teaching English were not quite qualified to teach it. Some of them whose speciality is history might be asked to teach English.

There is no teaching equipment. The teacher has to do everything herself. There is a lot of pressure to stick to the syllabus and finish it. So most of the teachers relied heavily on the text and the syllabus in order to cover everything before the end of the year, with the result that nothing was accomplished properly. Emphasis therefore was on quantity not on the quality.

Talking about texts, she said the whole text was oriented toward British culture and she, being an American, was repulsed at the idea of teaching British culture. She used the grammar and the exercises but she basically wrote her own materials. She used local authors and local folk tales. She also used a text, that was published just before she left, that was oriented toward African culture and literature. It also dealt with concrete African things. She was of the opinion that the students were going to like the book oriented toward their immediate environment; but to her surprise they didn't. They preferred the British text books. They preferred reading about washing machines and drive-in movies instead of

Mamadou's life history. She said the reason for this was because students felt they knew things described in the African text; on the other hand, they were curious to know about things in other countries.

Commenting on the students, she observed that students felt privileged to have a native speaker of English. They thought, therefore, that they were learning a better-

English than the kids in the other classes, to the extent that they made fun of the other students, telling them that they spoke inferior English.

She helped train teachers who were going to teach at the beginning levels. Most of these did not have the high school diploma and their spoken English was inadequate.

There was a white inspector of schools, she said, who visited schools, giving suggestions to teachers and introducing them to texts and other methods of teaching. She said in other places teachers had to beg inspectors to visit their schools.

She stressed the need for improvement in the fluency of the teachers and getting them to feel comfortable with using teaching aids, and dialogues in their teaching. Teachers, she said, should be introduced to the oral method of teaching. Students had been taught so much grammar that they wanted to know the function of each word. She, however, often told them that it did not matter but the most important thing was knowing the meaning of the word and using it in communication.

She was disgusted with the attitude toward the final examination. Students often wanted her to teach them to answer the past questions on the final examination. She is therefore of the strong opinion that no one could change teaching and what is happening in the classroom, until the government examinations have been changed in one way or the other.

She also advised that oral English be stressed in the earlier grades so that students can be confident in speaking the language when they reach higher grades.

INTERVIEW WITH JOEL SCHLESINGER

Joel taught in Senegal for two years. Among his impressions about the standard of teaching English was the low and traditional methodology, which should have been more modern and effective. He said such an impression might have come from the fact that he had been associated with the Peace Corps. They use the most advanced techniques of teaching language to which he was introduced before he left the United States for Senegal. He was therefore disappointed when he found that the African teachers were using these very traditional methods in their classrooms. The emphasis was not on spoken language, which he thinks is most important, but on grammar and translations, reading and writing.

The reason for this was that a lot of the people who were teaching English did not have self-confidence and did not feel comfortable in the language themselves. They were educated to read and write English and not to communicate; therefore they emphasized the things they were strong in which were reading and writing, so there were lots of students who after completing the seven years of required English could read and write fairly well.

Their grammar is fairly good too but they have problems with speaking and expressing themselves. He said pronunciation is what suffers the most distortion and the students make mistakes they don't make when writing because they are not accustomed to speaking. He is of

the strong opinion that the spoken language should be emphasized.

Commenting on the African teachers, he said the most effective ones were those who worked on Peace Corps programs or had been trained abroad and so exposed to the modern teaching techniques. Some of the Senegalese teachers have been trained by the Peace Corps to teach Senegalese languages to Peace Corps Volunteers and use the same methods to teach English.

He mentioned that the students have been learning in the rigid French educational system for a long time, in which the teacher gives the students the French word and then translates it into English for them. Sometimes the teacher goes back to the indigeneous language. The students do little speaking in class. This is a problem for the teacher who wants to introduce new techniques because the students feel very comfortable in the old method where they just sit and are given whatever the teachers want them to have. The students as a result object to anything new and feel very uncomfortable in the new situation.

He ran into this problem in Senegal. He used to teach a whole lesson without ever having them take out their notebooks and writing; it was all oral. The students were very uncomfortable. After class was over, the students would ask "How come you did not give us the French word, or how come we didn't write down anything?" He was teaching them to speak the language as

opposed to just writing it. The reason for their objections, he stressed, is not only because they were schooled in this way but because they have an examination to pass which consists of reading and writing. That would meet their educational plans; but as far as world experience is concerned their knowledge is very limited because they are not tested orally.

About texts, he said there were not enough so the students had to share among themselves. He commented that the texts were written in France for teaching English. He said these texts were written in English English and not American English. Students would at times question his teaching English since, they said, he did not speak English. He also observed that students are so used to the text-book that any teacher who tries to bring in teaching games or create his own dialogue is resented. Anything outside the text students feel is a waste of time because they are not reading from their books or writing anything down.

He feels very strongly that there was too much emphasis on grammar and writing and a lack of creativity. The final examination is based on the text so students just memorize the text and are not able to criticize a writer or discuss an idea. What is important to the student is not speaking the language well but passing the examination. He observed that the tests used were unimaginative and were written in the fifties by English men for French educational system and had no relevance

to the Africans.

He would like to see the texts relate to students' experience or imagination. He gave as an example, a chapter about snowy Christmas time in England, where as in fact Senegal is a Moslem country. He wrote some of his texts, but since he knew his students were text-conscious he would take some of the vocabulary and ideas and grammar and use these in a situation that related to the students' immediate environment. He made mention of a new text that was just published entitled "Teaching English in Madagascar Africa;" it is an Africanized text.

His relationship with his students was unique because the students wanted to hear more about America. He also got along with the African teachers but the French teachers resented him because his techniques were innovative and the French resent anything innovative because their techniques are very traditional. They did not understand why he taught the way he did and felt the students were not learning. There were real differences over technique but they did not spend time talking about them.

In his suggestions for improving the system he suggested an overall change in the educational system to make it more relevant to the needs of the African students. It should be realized that language should be studied for very functional use and not just to pass an examination.

Classes should be made smaller because there is no

way to do oral work, with a class of forty to fifty students, successfully. That is why it had often boiled down to "Open your books at page 55 and do the exercises!"

He emphasized the importance of a good teacher training program. It makes no difference where the teacher is trained, the emphasis should be on a perfect command of English. He observed that most of the Senegalese English teachers did not speak English very well themselves, so it is no wonder that the level of English teaching is low. There should be continuing workshops for teaching techniques. This was lacking because the system is heavily French-dominated and they discourage seminars and workshops where their traditional techniques would be threatened.

He stressed that there isn't one specific method, but techniques could be adopted to suit large classes. Slower students should be put in a class where they could get more attention.

He cited the "Silent Way" as one which he thinks can never work in an African class of fifty-five students. He also encouraged educators to view the language problems in Africa before introducing techniques to suit their situations.

Even with the Peace Corps Volunteers they taught by specific method year after year. "They bore their students to death," he said.

He advised that in order to get teachers to improve upon their techniques, by attending workshops, they should be

given credits in a graded salary scale; it is only fair to provide the teachers with some incentive for going to workshops.

Some teachers have openly said that they had been teaching for fifteen years in this way so they don't need any new materials. If the Ministry of Education could find a way of getting them to improve their techniques, the level of teaching would rise significantly.

ARTICLE BY C.E. BEEBY

C.E. Beeby wrote an article on some of the problems and methods of solution for teachers in Africa.

He said the majority of African primary teachers with their low level of education and training cannot make use of techniques, materials and goals appropriate to other systems. However, one cannot move directly from a system of education based on rote learning to a system where meaning and understanding are everything, but one can move there by stages.

Most Africans who learn English learn it at school, from primary school teachers who do not have a good command of English. In Africa the opportunity for learning English by natural assimilation from the environment is severely limited. Most African children have their first real contact with the English language when they enter the primary school. English instruction at this level is largely in the hands of African teachers who have not had any basic training. The model of English provided by the African primary teachers is most likely inadequate, and pronunciation suffers most.

Suggestions made by C.E. Beeby: Primary school teachers should be given well defined syllabuses and material and a teachers' guide. A pre-recorded lesson's material is probably one of the most powerful teaching aids that can be placed in the hands of the primary teacher.

The teacher training colleges should prepare students to use materials requiring mastery of precise techniques. Students should be exposed to techniques that are effective in aural-oral teaching. Without the appropriate teaching techniques the average teacher soon resorts to endless repetition of the same words and sentences.

Primary school teachers should be trained to teach a specific course and to rely on the techniques and teaching aids prescribed for it.

ARTICLE BY DAVID A. DAUM, BRITISH PROFESSOR

In his recent article in the English Language Teaching Journal Vol. XXVII he pointed out the terrible mistake in wholesale transfer of an educational system from one country to another, because in Africa the problems of language teaching are qualitatively different from those in the United Kingdom or in North America. Solutions proposed to the problems of language teaching in Africa which are based on the idea of direct transferability of experience from these countries to Africa will undoubtedly be inadequate.

Another major problem he pointed out was the reliance of teachers on out-moded curricula and instructional materials. He stressed that materials and syllabuses have never been appropriate because, in part, they neglected English as a basic means of communication. He feels nothing great can be achieved in an educational system staffed largely by teachers with a low level of education. Educational planning, he said, has concentrated on increasing the quantity and not too much, until recently, has been done to increase the quality of education.

He cited the compulsory education plan which encouraged universal primary education. This system employed less qualified teachers to meet the growing student population. The resulting increase in the number of students, he strongly stressed, does not guarantee a cor-

responding increase in the number of useful graduates because a fall in the quality of work may be expected to increase the number of failures and drop-outs, poor teaching has to take its share of the blame in the number of drop outs.

He attributed poor teaching to the general low educational level of the teachers. He said there are lots of teachers who have little more than primary education. They therefore teach to the limits of their knowledge and cannot use methods which encourage students to ask questions because they will not know the answer. They concentrate on relatively narrow subject matter and, as a result, memorization and repetition take up a good part of the school day. Few of the teachers, he said, have had the kind of training which would have made them aware of teaching methods more enlightened than those to which they were subjected. They may have been taught the evils of memorization or rote learning but not given techniques for avoiding it or an example of teaching some other way. They therefore teach the way they have been taught. Most of these teachers are not supervised and not aided he concluded.

By way of suggestion he advocated a raise in the level of instruction in the classrooms served by poorly qualified teachers and upgrading the teachers' educational level and changes in methods of education.

New materials or techniques, however useful, cannot be expected to produce desirable results

by themselves. Language teaching materials should be defined so as to include not only the more traditional items like texts, charts and teachers' manuals, but also things that are audio-visual.

Training colleges should concentrate not only on upgrading the standard of education of the teachers but also teaching them ways to bring variations into their classes.

Africans, he said, should in planning their educational programs, aim these to their needs instead of copying wholesale, without adaptations, educational systems from other countries.

ARTICLE BY DUNCAN FORBES

Duncan Forbes has been an ESL teacher for twenty years, and an advisor to the Ministry of Education in one of the East African countries.

He pointed out the following complaints. Many teachers say a lot of the students are unable to put two sentences together correctly. Teachers are blamed for poor teaching and are always trying to get the students to pass the traditional examination in which very few of them succeed. As a result, both students and teachers are very anxious, the student's entire future depends upon it, and the teacher's professional competence is at stake. Therefore it appears best to them to devote most of their time to work that, it seems, will help them to succeed.

He pointed out that teachers teach what they want and not what the students need, and the questions asked do not in anyway encourage creative thought and judgement. The teachers are not fluent enough themselves and the criterion of correctness and incorrectness is very imperfect in the hands of teachers who are not native speakers of English. The majority of the teachers used very traditional methods that they had been taught generations ago. "So it's eyes up to the sentences on the blackboard - sentence patterns for tenses, for modals, for relative clauses which is right and which is wrong? Write them down to remember them." Sentences are taught in isolation,

not in context.

He said there is no interesting nor memorable piece of description or narrative or conversation or oratory to show how one structure is interlinked with another, or to show how one verb's tense affects another to alter the meaning of words. He also emphasized that reading material is still in the realm of tales from Shakespeare.

He strongly feels that the best work should be done in the elementary schools when children are still in their innocence. But unfortunately as children move up instead of the courses becoming vitally enriched by drama and debates by reading and writing with appreciation and understanding, they fade away into a dull pattern practice which is a hundred times harder to assimilate because it is not embedded in memorable or meaningful contexts.

Teachers gave free compositions - too free he emphasized, for most ESL students and usually this results in a depressing string of mistakes.

He pleads for an attractive course that would be made up of a treasure house of rich material that can be remembered and valued once the language barrier has been penetrated; that can be assimilated in a valuable and interlocking context of meaning.

He encouraged controlled composition and multiple choice questions, drama, debates and conversations.